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FROM: AUTH. AMCONGEN, LAGOS, NIGERIA

ENDORSE EXISTING CLASSIFICATION

TO: DECLASSIFY THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

RELEASE DENIED

REF: AMCONGEN's Despatch No. 36, September 15, 1954.

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October 14, 1954 DATE

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SUBJECT: Review of Political Developments in Nigeria -- September 15 - October 12, 1954.

Change-Over to Revised Constitution - October 1.

The principal events which marked the change-over to the revised Constitution, which came into operation on October 1, have already been reported in several despatches from this Consulate General (e.g., No. 47, Oct. 7; No. 48, Oct. 7; No. 50, Oct. 8), and had already been outlined in earlier despatches (No. 12, July 20; No. 36, Sept. 15; No. 42, Sept. 29). The various ceremonies which marked the date in the Regional capitals went off without disturbances or other untoward happenings. As earlier reported, the Western Region made more of an event of the change-over than did the others, perhaps because a new Governor of the Region arrived and was installed, as well as the Premier - Mr. Awolowo. There the ceremonies were not held until October 4, as the new Governor of the Western Region - Sir John Rankine - did not arrive in Nigeria until October 3.

The Eastern Region was the only one that did not observe October 1 as a public holiday, presumably preferring to strike a note of work and simplicity since Mr. Awolowo had chosen to make something of a ceremonial event of the change-over in the Western Region.

There were no public ceremonies in Lagos, the Governor-General - Sir John Macpherson - merely taking his oath of office in the presence of the Council of Ministers and Privy Council at Government House, and returning to his tour of the Benue Area the following day. A small "family" dinner was given for him by the Chief Secretary of the Federation and Lady Marshall the preceding evening, at which my wife and I, and three or four senior officers of the Government who have long been associated with the Governor-General, and their wives, were present.

Meetings of Regional Houses of Assembly.

The last meeting of the Eastern House of Assembly, before the revised Constitution came into operation, adjourned on September 25.

Principal

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Principal substantive accomplishments were the approval of supplementary appropriations of around £1,200,000 for the current fiscal year, and authorization for the raising of a development loan of £5,000,000, of which £3,000,000 would be in Nigeria and £2,000,000 from outside.

In a continuation of the NCNC - Action Group political bidding match over minimum wages for government day workers, reported at some length in Despatch No. 36, of September 15, the NCNC - controlled Eastern Region House adopted a motion calling on the Eastern Region Government "to consider" the adoption of a minimum daily wage of 7½ shillings. Dr. Azikiwe refused to be pinned down to an effective date for the installation of this wage, and there were many utterances (aimed at Awolowo's minimum wage manouvres in the West) in learned terms that in the East the matter would be taken up on a "scientific" basis; productivity should be studied; labor union machinery might be used in fixing wages; there must be assurance that wage increases were not followed by price fluctuations, etc.

It may be noted that the cost of "regionlization" is making itself felt. Aside from the supplemental appropriations of about £4,000,000 for the Federal Government for the current fiscal year (much of which will go to the Regions) adopted by the Central Legislature in August, all of the Regional Houses of Assembly voted sizeable supplemental appropriations in September -- the East approximately £1,200,000; the North £2,100,000, and the West £4,000,000. The splitting up of functions between Regions (not to mention Lagos and the Southern Cameroons) inevitably makes for a sizeable amount of duplication of work and up-grading of positions, aside from the creation of new ones required by the increased regional responsibilities. The fact that the Regional Governments themselves collect little revenue, but depend largely on collections by the Federal Government and allocations and grants to them, may well make for less sense of financial responsibility on the part of Regional politicians than is desirable. While the system, for which there seems to be no practical alternative, has worked well under disinterested expatriate direction, the system may present its problems as self-government comes along.

Also, with much of their funds now being allocated to the Regions on a derivation basis, e.g. revenues from export duties, one Region may suffer in relation to another if world prices of its major products decline materially. In this connection, it is to be recalled that, generally speaking, their economies are based on single major export commodities -- cocoa in the West; palm oil in the East; ground-nuts in the North; and bananas in the Southern Cameroons. For the present, the Western Region, with cocoa as its mainstay, appears to be in a relatively secure position.

As has been reported in Despatch No. 47, of October 7, brief sessions of the Eastern and Western Houses of Assembly were held after the

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after the revised Constitution came into effect. Aside from brief debate on the Governor's "speech from the throne", and considerable cangratulatory speech-making, the Eastern House seems to have transacted little business prior to adjournment on October 6. In this connection, Azikiwe's NCNC Government has been under considerable fire from the Action Group for failure to introduce even a policy paper at the session.

There has also been continued AG and opposition (NIP) sniping at Dr. Azikiwe's failure to file his long-promised report on his and Ojukwu's economic mission to Europe and the United States. On the two occasions that Dr. Azikiwe has been in Lagos since his return, I have, incidentally, mentioned to him casually my interest in receiving a copy of the report when it is prepared for release. From his vagueness on the subject, I have gained the impression that report-writing is not Dr. Azikiwe's long suit, and that the report does not occupy a very urgent place on his agenda.

The Western House, after the new Governor's speech from the throne and debate thereon, as well as congratulatory speeches, got down to some substantive work. It passed an amendment to the criminal code, which according to the Action Group press is designed primarily to prevent riots, but according to the NCNC press is designed primarily to bring the Western Regional Ministers under the cloak of the anti-sedition clauses, making such matters as the imputation of "an improper motive" to a Western Regional Minister an offence.

With Awolowo already being accused of dictatorial leanings by his NCNC opposition, should he one day get a free hand in the Western Region, the NCNC members had something of a field day over the measure, and then walked out of the House when their move to suspend consideration for six months (i.e. until after the elections to the new Federal House) failed. The measure was variously characterized by the NCNC as "infamous, oppresive, fascist, and repressive". Lighter notes were to be found in the introduction of the bill by the Western Region Minister of Health, its connection with his portfolio being somewhat obscure, and in its defense by the newly appointed Western Region Minister of Home Affairs, Tony Enahoro. Mr. Enahoro (AG), who has a long record of intemperate speech and who himself did a term for sedition several years ago, reportedly appealed to the House to "keep the debate as clean as possible".

Just before the Western House adjourned on October 9, Awolowo opened another round with the NCNC on the "vote-catching" minimum wage for day labor issue. He announced that, effective from October 1, the Western Regional Government would pay its day labor five shillings per day, and that he hoped other employers would follow suit. The general impression in Lagos is that Awolowo took this step with misgivings (Desp. No. 36, of Sept. 15), but was more or less pushed to it by Tony Enahoro, his new Minister for Home Affairs. There is considerable concern that the step will be accompanied by price increases,

price increases, and that difficulties will arise from the disparity between the new wage for day laborers for the Western Government, and those employed by the Federal Government and the Native Authorities, who may work side by side with the Western Region laborers.

The Northern House has not met since the revised Constitution came into operation, but presumably will convene for a brief session when the Governor, Sir Bryan Sharwood-Smith, returns from leave next month.

Regional Executive Councils.

The new Regional Executive Councils of the Eastern and Western Regions were appointed and took office shortly after the effective date of the revised Constitution. Their composition has been reported in the Consulate General's despatch No. 48, of October 7. As will be recalled, the Executive Councils of these two Regions are entirely composed of Nigerians, excepting the Governors, who are Presidents of the respective Councils. In the Western Region, the new Council largely takes the form of a reappointment of members of the former Council, plus two new appointments -- Tony Enahoro (Home Affairs) and Chief Rotemi Williams (Justice and Local Government). The total number of Nigerian Ministers in the West remains the same, and no parliamentary secretaries have yet been appointed.

In the East, Azikiwe has increased the total number of Nigerian Ministers by four (to a total of 12), and appointed 13 Parliamentary Secretaries -- one more than the revised Constitution envisages, i.e., one for each Minister. It may be added that no one is quite sure what a Parliamentary Secretary is to do, that could not be done between the Minister and his Permanent Secretary -- particularly if the Minister devotes time to his portfolio rather than to politics. This profileration of top jobs in the East has given the Action Group press a field day on what it calls the NCNC's "jobs for the boys" approach to regionalization.

It may be added that, in the East at least, the new and more elevated titles have been taken to with great gusto, Nigerian fondness for such things being what it is. Azikiwe's and Awolowo's titles of Premier have been elevated to "Prime Minister" in the local press and all Regional Ministers and Parliamentary Secretaries are "The Honorable".

The Northern Region has not announced a new Council of Ministers, and it is assumed that the previous one will carry on for the time being.

Elections to New Federal House of Representatives.

The regulations and dates for the elections to the new Federal House of Representatives have already been reported to the Department (e.g. Congen's despatches No. 42, Sept. 29; No. 45, Oct. 5, and No. 55, October 11). In the Eastern and Western Regions, at least, nominations

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nominations must be completed by about the end of this month. Present indications are that, with the possible exception of the North, and a few leaders who would be logical appointees to the Federal Council of Ministers, the candidates for the Federal House will be largely "second-stringers". The relative attractions of service in the Regional Houses and Governments under the revised Constitution were pointed out in the Consulate General's despatch No. 12, of July 20.

It will be interesting to see how many of the potential voters actually register and vote, including particularly the Eastern Region and Lagos where there is no tax qualification and the NCNC has been making much of "universal adult suffrage". The general impression is that even in these areas the women, who are often the major bread-winners will not register, their allergy to anything which might, in their minds, be used in connection with the preparation of tax lists being well known. This does not mean, however, that the wife (or wives) will not tell the husband how to vote, even in the Moslem North, and hold him to strict accountability!

What with the meetings of the Eastern and Western Houses, and Regional Government reorganizations, the two major parties in the two Regions (the NCNC and the AG) have not really got down to campaigning, beyond the usual name-calling in the press and public statements. Also, the affray at Oyo last month, on which the Commission of Inquiry is still holding hearings, may have put something of a damper on excursions into each others political bailiwicks. It may be mentioned that the inquiry was forced to adjourn for some days while the Western House was in session, as the stenographers who had been taking testimony had to serve at the meeting of the House, and no others were available.

Almost nothing has been heard from the Northern Region, but a well-informed source in the Government here is of the opinion that the NPC may suffer something of a set-back from the NEPU in the North, and this and other parties in the middle belt provinces which are in the Northern Region.

NCNC Manifesto.

The NCNC has issued a lengthy 79-point manifesto for the forth-coming elections to the new Federal House of Representatives. As usual with such documents, it contains something for everyone, including some barbed arrows armed at Awolowo, e.g., "the NCNC does not seek to replace white imperialism by black imperialism". From the strictly political standpoint, the most interesting features are its definition of the political objective of the NCNC as Dominion status in 1956; the division of the Regions into States; denial of the right of session to any Region or State; the establishment of a bi-cameral Federal Legislature; and the "play" that is made for

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the support of the natural rulers. All in all, when stripped of its political verbiage and of features designed as political propaganda for the forthcoming elections or as attacks on the Action Group, it appears to be a much better considered and reasonable document than the Action Group manifesto. A copy of the latter was transmitted with Despatch No. 36, of Sept. 15, 1954.

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It may be added that the regionalization under the new Constitution is making it increasingly difficult to obtain accurate and up-to-date information on developments in the Regions. The inaccuracies and scanty substantive coverage by most of the local press requires no comment, and officers of the Federal Government who were formerly well informed of developments in the Regions are noticably less well informed now.

Also, the Department's cancellation of travel orders for courier travel between Lagos and Accra (Dept's OM of October 4), with no indication as to any future system of transmitting safe-hand material between this Consulate General and the Department, leaves the Consulate without any means of transmitting despatches classified above "Official Use Only". The Consulate General therefore has no idea when this despatch may be forwarded to the Department.

Erwin P. Keeler
American Consul General

Enclosure:
Copy of NCNC Manifesto